

THE UNITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

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Divide et impera—divide and rule—was an old Roman maxim. The Romans applied it to government; modern Criticism, to the Pentateuch.

Wolff applied it to the Iliad and the Odyssey, and announced to the literary world that they were a collection of separate lays, by different authors, arranged and put together for the first time during the administration and by the order of Pisistratus. It was admitted by his opponents that these poems furnish evidence of the prior existence of lays and legends of the ballad kind; but notwithstanding this admission, they proved that a single poet—called Homer—compiled from these lays and legends two consistent and harmonious poems.

In the same way, it is asserted by some Biblical critics, that different accounts of the same thing and repetitions occur in the Pentateuch; and that these are a sure mark of at least two authors. The occurrence of double narratives renders the hypothesis of two independent and continuous histories plausible; but the attempt to assign one of these double narratives to the Elohist, and the other to the Jehovist, breaks down from time to time, by the confession of the critics themselves.

On the hypothesis, adopted by some, that there was only one original continuous history, subsequently interpolated, the objection against unity of authorship, drawn from double narratives, falls to the ground. But, on this hypothesis, it is difficult to understand, why an editor, or redactor, should confuse and disfigure a clear narrative, by interpolating passages, which have the appearance of repetitions, unless the events did really occur a second time.

An explanation of some of these repetitions has been attempted on the ground of a peculiarity of the Hebrew language; but the writer will waive this point for the present, and proceed to show very briefly that the books of the Pentateuch possess both *external* and *internal* unity.

I. EXTERNAL UNITY.

There is a chronological order in these books, beginning with the creation of man. This order is coherent, definite and exact. It may be called chronologico-genealogical, as it connects the computation of

time with the life-time of the patriarchs, or rather with the time between the birth of the father and the birth of the son named in the genealogical table, who may not always have been either the first-born son, or the first-born child.

The fifth chapter of Genesis furnishes us with the chronological data from Adam to Shem, or to the five hundredth year of Noah's life. Chap. VII., 6, gives the time from the latter date until the Flood. Comparing this date with that given in chap. VIII., 13, 14, we find the duration of the Flood. In chap. XI., 10-26 (compare v. 32) are contained the chronological data from the Flood to Abraham. Chap. XXI., 5, brings the chronology down to the birth of Isaac; chap. XXV., 26, to the birth of Jacob; and chap. XLVII., 9, to the time of the migration of the children of Israel into Egypt.

Exodus XII., 40, 41, gives the duration of their sojourn in Egypt. This passage gives the month and the day of their departure from Egypt, because that day constituted the commencement of the era according to which all subsequent events of great importance were determined (Ex. XVI., 1; XIX., 1; XL., 17; Num. I., 1, 8; XXXIII., 38; Deut. I., 3; 1 Kgs. VI., 1). Deut. I., 3 (compare Josh. v., 6) gives the time of their wandering in the wilderness.

The question of the correctness of the Pentateuch chronology has no place here. Correct or incorrect, it furnishes proof of external unity; and this external unity affords a strong presumption of unity of authorship.

II. INTERNAL UNITY.

But its internal unity, proving its organic character, affords a still stronger presumption. Indeed, it seems difficult to account for it, except on the hypothesis that the whole Pentateuch came from the hand of a single author, at least that it was planned and written by, or under the direction of, a single author.

This internal unity will now be briefly exhibited.

The central point of the Pentateuch is the covenant made by the mediation of Moses, between Jehovah and His people. Every thing, in the Pentateuch, before the time of Moses, was preparatory to that covenant; and every thing, in the same book, during this time, was a development of it. By this it is not meant that its development came to a close at the death of Moses; but that the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy give a history of it up to that time.

The national covenant, made at Sinai, was preceded by and founded on the Abrahamic covenant recorded in Genesis. This covenant finds its

explanation in the previous history, which is accordingly given by the sacred historians. In order to understand this covenant, and the Mosaic economy also, the history, contained in the book of Genesis, is necessary; for the history of Israel begins with that of the world. "The work of Creation, in its fundamental plan," Haevernicks remarks, "at once proclaims itself as intimately connected with the Theocracy. Viewed from its internal side, the fundamental idea of the Theocracy, to be holy like to the holy God, and the consecration of the people, the priestly family, &c., arising thence, can be apprehended only in their relation to the beginning of the human race, and its relation to God; so that the Theocracy is connected with Gen. I., 27, as the restoration of that which formerly subsisted."

Gen. I., 27, reveals to us the original destination of man; and it represents the human race, in its origin, as a unit related to God, as its Creator and Ruler. By the Fall, it became separated from God; but it still continued to be the object of his care, and the possessor of His promise.

It was necessary, therefore, that a history of the Theocracy should begin with the origin of man. Apart from his origin and destination, the Theocracy is inexplicable.

Hence the Pentateuch begins with the book of Origins. Genesis narrates:

- I. The origin of Heaven and Earth.
- II. The origin of the Human Race.
- III. The origin of Sin in the World.
- IV. The origin of Sacrifice.
- V. The origin of Covenant Promises.
- VI. The origin of Nations and Languages.
- VII. The origin of the Hebrew Race.

The early history of the world, until the time of Abraham, is very brief. From Noah, the second father of the human family, every thing hastens on to the history of Abraham's call from Ur of the Chaldees, and to his entrance into Canaan, which were a preparation for Mosaism. To him a special blessing, in his seed, upon all the nations of the earth, was promised; and the land of Canaan was assigned to his posterity, through Isaac, as a possession.

The character of Abraham was typically theocratical. The offices of the Theocracy appeared united in him. He is called a prophet (Gen. xx., 7); he acted as a priest by building altars and offering sacrifices; and to him as king, God gave the land of Canaan in perpetual possession.

The history of Abraham is written in a theocratic spirit; and from his time until the death of Moses, the Pentateuch is confined to the history of the theocratic people.

The history communicates little of the life of Isaac, which was comparatively quiet and uneventful; but it gives many details of the life of Jacob, the progenitor of the twelve tribes. The history of Joseph, with the exception of some particulars relating to the family of Judah (Gen. xxxviii.), follows next, which prepares for the emigration of the children of Israel from Canaan to Egypt, where Jacob died after he had blessed his sons and made to them the prophetic announcement that their descendants should possess the land which they had left.

The preparatory part of the theocratic history ceases with Joseph, and remains silent until the time of Moses, the leader and law-giver of God's chosen people.

The book of Exodus begins with a distinct reference to that of Genesis, and is unintelligible apart from it. The early history of Moses is then briefly given. And when "the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage;" then, "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them" (Ex. ii., 23-25).

Then follows the history of their deliverance and of their journey to Sinai. At Sinai they received the Law, by which they were constituted a theocratic nation.

God now proceeded with them on a plan strictly pedagogic. The Decalogue, as the fundamental law, stands first; and the other laws, both civil and ceremonial, are framed to carry out its principles. The whole national life was to be imbued with the spirit of the law; and all the institutions growing out of it were intended to remind the people that they should be holy, because Jehovah, their God, is holy.

The Theocracy required that God should dwell among His people. Hence Moses was commanded to make a tabernacle to be the meeting-place between God and them. The building of the tabernacle, with all its appurtenances, is given with great minuteness of detail. But a tabernacle, with appointments for religious worship, requires ministers of religion. The history, accordingly, gives an account of the designation of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, with a description of their holy garments and of the ceremonies to be used at their consecration.

The book of Leviticus presupposes Exodus by a direct reference to the tabernacle from which the Lord speaks to Moses. The laws of sacrifice form the commencement of the book, in which their general nature is described, the division into the bloody and unbloody, their objects and the time, place, and manner of their presentation. Then follows the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. The tabernacle or sanctuary, having been made the centre of the whole nation, the remainder of the book prescribes the laws of cleanness and uncleanness; and nature and all animal life are made to furnish a testimony of the defilement of sin, and the holiness of Jehovah.

The book of Numbers also begins with a reference to the tabernacle, and embraces a period of thirty-eight years. Its contents are of a miscellaneous character, history and legislation alternating with each other in the order of time. In the history of these thirty-eight years there are three salient points. The *first* is the departure from Sinai; the preparation for which, the order of march, and the incidents of the journey to the wilderness of Paran are described. The *second* is that of the sending of the spies to search the land of Canaan, and of the rebellion of the people on hearing their reports. This was in the second year of the exodus. Of the events that follow until the third, we have only a brief notice. The *third* begins with the second arrival of the children of Israel at Kadesh, and continues the history until their arrival "in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho."

The book of Deuteronomy forms a natural close to the preceding book. It is an appropriate farewell address of Moses, the great law-giver and leader, whom God had appointed to guide his people from Egypt to Canaan. That great man, having by divine direction appointed Joshua his successor, recapitulated to the people, whom he had guided to the border of the Holy Land, their past history; repeated, with exhortations to obedience, the law given at Sinai; pronounced blessings and curses as motives to obedience; and then retired to Mount Nebo to die.

From this rapid sketch, it is evident that the Pentateuch is a continuous history,—a unit. Genesis is inseparable as an introduction; Deuteronomy, as a close.

The history of Abraham anticipates the history of the theocratic people until their introduction into the typical inheritance of the people of God; and their introduction into that inheritance would be inexplicable without a knowledge of the previous history.